

Department of Energy

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independent of those submitting the applications and who are knowledgeable in the field of endeavor for which support is requested.

(b) Each program office must establish a merit review system covering the financial assistance programs it administers. Merit review of financial assistance applications is intended to be advisory and is not intended to replace the authority of the project/program official with responsibility for deciding whether an award will be made.

[64 FR 56420, Oct. 20, 1999]

§ 600.15 Authorized uses of information.

(a) *General.* Information contained in applications shall be used only for evaluation purposes unless such information is generally available to the public or is already the property of the Government. The Trade Secrets Act, 18 U.S.C. 1905, prohibits the unauthorized disclosure by Federal employees of trade secret and confidential business information.

(b) *Treatment of application information.* (1) An application may include technical data and other data, including trade secrets and/or privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, which the applicant does not want disclosed to the public or used by the Government for any purpose other than application evaluation. To protect such data, the applicant should specifically identify each page including each line or paragraph thereof containing the data to be protected and mark the cover sheet of the application with the following Notice as well as referring to the Notice on each page to which the Notice applies:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data

The data contained in pages _____ of this application have been submitted in confidence and contain trade secrets or proprietary information, and such data shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes, provided that if this applicant receives an award as a result of or in connection with the submission of this application, DOE shall have the right to use or disclose the data herein to the extent provided in the award. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use or disclose data

obtained without restriction from any source, including the applicant.

(2) Unless a solicitation specifies otherwise, DOE shall not refuse to consider an application solely on the basis that the application is restrictively marked.

(3) Data (or abstracts of data) marked with the Notice under paragraph (b)(1) of this section shall be retained in confidence and used by DOE or its designated representatives as specified in § 600.13 solely for the purpose of evaluating the proposal. The data so marked shall not be disclosed or used for any other purpose except to the extent provided in any resulting award, or to the extent required by law, including the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) (10 CFR part 1004). The Government shall not be liable for disclosure or use of unmarked data and may use or disclose such data for any purpose.

[61 FR 7166, Feb. 26, 1996, as amended at 68 FR 50650, Aug. 21, 2003]

§ 600.16 Legal authority and effect of an award.

(a) A DOE financial assistance award is valid only if it is in writing and is signed, either in writing or electronically, by a DOE Contracting Officer.

(b) DOE funds awarded under a grant or cooperative agreement shall be obligated as of the date the DOE Contracting Officer signs the award; however, the recipient is not authorized to incur costs under an award prior to the beginning date of the budget period shown in the award except as may be authorized in accordance with §§ 600.125(e) or 600.230 of this part. The duration of the DOE financial obligation shall not extend beyond the expiration date of the budget period shown in the award unless authorized by a DOE Contracting Officer by means of a continuation or renewal award or other extension of the budget period.

§ 600.17 Contents of award.

Each financial assistance award shall be made on a Notice of Financial Assistance Award (DOE F 4600.1) which contains basic identifying and funding information together with attachments including a budget, any special terms

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and conditions, and any other provisions necessary to establish the respective right, duties, obligation, and responsibilities of DOE and the recipient, consistent with the requirements of this part.

§ 600.18 Recipient acknowledgement of award.

(a) After signature by the DOE Contracting Officer, the award shall be sent to the recipient. The recipient shall acknowledge acceptance by returning a copy signed either in writing or electronically. No DOE funds shall be disbursed until the award document signed by the recipient is received by DOE.

(b) In the event a recipient declines an award, DOE shall deobligate the funds obligated by the award after providing the applicant with at least two weeks written notice of DOE's intention to deobligate.

(c) After the recipient acknowledges the award, the terms and conditions of the award may be amended only upon the written request or with the written concurrence of the recipient unless the amendment is one which DOE may make unilaterally in accordance with a program rule or this part.

§ 600.19 Notification to unsuccessful applicants.

DOE shall promptly notify in writing each applicant whose application has not been selected for award or whose application cannot be funded because of the unavailability of appropriated funds. If the application was not selected, the written notice shall briefly explain why the application was not selected and, if for grounds other than unavailability of funds, shall offer the unsuccessful applicant the opportunity for a more detailed explanation upon request.

§ 600.20 Maximum DOE obligation.

(a) The maximum DOE obligation to the recipient is—

(1) For monetary awards, the amount shown in the award as the amount of DOE funds obligated, and

(2) Any designated property.

(b) DOE shall not be obligated to make any additional, supplemental,

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continuation, renewal, or other award for the same or any other purpose.

§ 600.21 Access to records.

(a) In addition to recipient and subrecipient responsibilities relative to access to records specified in §§ 600.153 and 600.242, for any negotiated contract or subcontract in excess of \$10,000 under a grant or cooperative agreement, DOE, the Comptroller General of the United States, the recipient and the subrecipient (if the contract was awarded under a financial assistance subaward), or any of their authorized representatives shall have the right of access to any books, documents, papers, or other records of the contractor or subcontractor which are pertinent to that contract or subcontract, in order to make audit, examination, excerpts, and copies.

(b) The right of access may be exercised for as long as the applicable records are retained by the recipient, subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor.

§ 600.22 Disputes and appeals.

(a) *Informal dispute resolution.* Whenever practicable, DOE shall attempt to resolve informally any dispute over the award or administration of financial assistance. Informal resolution, including resolution through an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, shall be preferred over formal procedures available in 10 CFR Part 1024, to the extent practicable.

(b) *Alternative dispute resolution (ADR).* Before issuing a final determination in any dispute in which informal resolution has not been achieved, the Contracting Officer shall suggest that the other party consider the use of voluntary consensual methods of dispute resolution, such as mediation. The DOE dispute resolution specialist is available to provide assistance for such disputes, as are trained mediators of other federal agencies. ADR may be used at any stage of a dispute.

(c) *Final determination.* Whenever a dispute is not resolved informally or through an alternative dispute resolution process, DOE shall mail (by certified mail) a brief written determination signed by a Contracting Officer, setting forth DOE's final disposition of